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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 6, 2020

Ms. Katherine Tanner
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2020-03550

Dear Ms. Tanner:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 810566 (OGC#PP0172).

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for records pertaining to a named inmate. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.134, and 552.136 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Section 552.134(a) relates to inmates of the department and provides the following:

Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the [department] is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). Section 552.134 is explicitly made subject to section 552.029, which provides, in relevant part, the following:

Notwithstanding Section . . . 552.134, the following information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the [department] is subject to required disclosure under Section 552.021:

¹ We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

...

(8) basic information regarding the death of an inmate in custody, an incident involving the use of force, or an alleged crime involving the inmate.

Id. § 552.029(8). Although the inmate to whom the information at issue pertains is deceased, section 552.134 is applicable to information that relates to the decedent as an inmate. Thus, upon review, we agree the submitted records constitute information about an inmate for purposes of section 552.134. However, portions of the information at issue relate to the death of an inmate in custody and alleged crimes involving an inmate. Thus, the department must release basic information pertaining to these incidents pursuant to section 552.029(8). *See id.* For purposes of section 552.029(8), basic information includes the time and place of the incident, the names of inmates and department employees who were directly involved, a brief narrative of the incident, a brief description of any injuries sustained by anyone involved, and information regarding any criminal charges or disciplinary actions that were filed as a result of the incident.² Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, which must be released pursuant to section 552.029(8) of the Government Code, the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.134 of the Government Code.³

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Kieran Hillis
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KH/be

² We note basic information does not include the identities of witnesses for purposes of section 552.134 of the Government Code.

³ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)